



The Red Death

David Pilling

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It is the year 568 AD. From his monastic refuge in Brittany, King Arthur's aged grandson, Coel, begins to write the incredible story of his life. Now a monk, he is determined to complete his chronicle before death overtakes him. His tale begins shortly after the death of his famous grandfather at the Battle of Camlann. Britain is plunged into chaos, and Coel and his mother are forced to flee their homeland. They take with them Arthur's famous sword, Caledfwlch, once possessed by Julius Caesar. Known to the Romans as The Red Death, it is said to possess unearthly powers. Caesar's Sword (I): The Red Death follows the adventures of a British warrior of famous descent in the glittering, lethal world of the Late Roman Empire. From the riotous streets of Constantinople, to the racetrack of the Hippodrome and the bloodstained deserts of North Africa, he must fight to recover his birthright and his pride.

The Red Death Details

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From Reader Review The Red Death for online ebook

Dave Yeo says

1st David Pilling book I have read and I enjoyed very much, although not quite a 5 it wasn't far away, I think I'll try another book by him soon

Alison Bahmüller says

'Caesar's Sword (I): The Red Death' follows the adventures of Coel, King Arthur's grandson, in the dangerous world of the Late Roman Empire. The story, as narrated by Coel himself, begins shortly after the death of Arthur. Coel, then still a child, and his mother flee Britain and go to Constantinople, taking with them Arthur's famous sword Caledfwlch, once belonging to Julius Caesar and also known as The Red Death. Coel's story is a heart-touching one, and one feels for him while reading it.

From slavery to chariot racing to riots to battles in North Africa, this novel is packed with action and intrigue. Add to that some dangerous ruthless women and other colourful characters, and you have a riveting read. I particularly liked the way Flavius Belisarius is portrayed - I had never read about him before, and as soon as I finished the book, I wanted to read more about him and the other historical characters and events of the times.

The story is written in an easy-to-follow and witty style. The prose is beautiful, and there are even some flashes of humour. I really enjoyed this book, and am looking forward to the next instalment.

Christopher Sweeting says

Really enjoyed the story....takes a bit to get going, but not many historical fiction covers this time frame and enjoyed the connection made between The Eastern empire and Arthurian legend

Linda says

Right over might and right over wrong have a chance in this well written book. The book was a quick read by an author I had not read before. The mechanics of good writing were fine. The errors were few and insignificant.

Excalibur is Coen's inheritance from his grandfather, King Arthur. It is the same sword that Julius Caesar once possessed. Circumstances take Coen to Constantinople where he loses the sword to a soldier on his way to North Africa. Coen's quest is to recover his sword. Coen joins Belisarius' army which is going to North Africa to recapture lands that once belonged to the Roman empire. Coen endures more perils than Pauline in his quest.

To me, Coen represents that nondescript but honest man who experiences one magnificent moment in his

otherwise troubled life. He is that man who gets scant notice or reward for his courage, loyalty and dependability. He is a man I hope to meet again.

Thank you, Mr. Pilling, for a good read.

Paul Bennett says

My experience with the Arthur story is somewhat limited. Years ago I read and really enjoyed the Mary Stewart books and was subjected to the musical Camelot a few times as it was the wife's favorite movie. When I was introduced to David Pilling's work I was interested in his book Soldier of Fortune, The Wolf Cub but when I saw that this one was about the grandson of Arthur and the sword carried by Arthur and Julius Caesar, I put aside my original intention and decided to read this series first. The author chose the more Welsh version of the Arthurian legend and so his grandson, Coel, is the son of Amhar, the son who rebelled against Arthur and was slain by his father in battle. After Arthur is slain, Britain becomes unsafe for Coel and his mother so they make their way, first to Frankia and then Constantinople in search for a better life, a type of existence that is elusive to say the least. The story centers around Coel's early life, how he struggles to survive as he pursues the sword that is his birthright, a sword that has become an intricate part of his being and has taken hold of his soul.

The author has given us a tale that is at once riveting and that gives a glimpse into the era under Justinian and his famous general, Belisarius as well as a not so flattering a picture of Theodora, the Empress. This is indeed a strength of the author as he enables his characters to shine in all their glory or in their lack of humanity or somewhere in between. The story plays out well, with enough plot twists and variety of actions and scenes along with a nice flair for descriptive narrative. I was entranced from the beginning and will be sure to follow along Coel's story in the next book in the series, Siege of Rome. 5 stars.

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On Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Clash-...>

Jim Galford says

Unusual historical fantasy written as if told by the grandson of the mythical Arthur. it follows the demise of Arthur and the magical sword, alleged to have great powers and having once been the possession of Julius Caesar. the story is et in the end days of the empire.

John Wheelles says

The Prologue started out like a history text, and had me concerned.

Alas, my concern was for naught! This was an entertaining, as well as historic read. It gives a real insight into daily life in Constantinople under the Roman Empire. The characters were well developed, and most rather diabolical.

I look forward to the next installment!

John McCormick says

Excellent start to this trilogy of Arthur's grandson

This book grips you from first page to the last, with this start to the trilogy of Arthur's grandson and the Red Death a legendary sword.

Sound familiar well this is not "Excalibur" and our hero finds himself orphaned living on the streets of Constantinople.

No more giving away the plot or spoilers.

Suffice to say this a very enjoyable read, with an engaging hero, and numerous other well drawn characters good and bad. There is a real feel of time and place, with intrigues throughout.

Thomas says

Not Bad. This book is easy to read and full of action. You'll be right there with the protagonist, Coel, to experience slave auctions, boxing matches, chariot racing, sex shows (which include a tiger!) sports riots and battles in North Africa. The historical characters are well researched and somewhat accurately portrayed.

With all the intrigue and pageantry you'd think I'd be totally satisfied with the story, but yet I'm not.

David Pilling's description of the historical background is spot on, but Coel's story forced me to suspend disbelief just a bit too often. I can easily accept that he is King Arthur's grandson forced to leave Britain at a very tender age with his mother and flee across Europe to Constantinople, where both of them are sold as slaves upon their arrival. I have to suspend disbelief enough to imagine little Coel standing on the auction block with his grandfather's Roman short sword, Excalibur, strapped across his back. He got to keep it because the slave trader thought it looked cute and figured the weapon would fetch a better price for the pair at auction. Come on..allowing people on sale access to weaponry at the slave market?

It's no surprise that the buyer - an arrogant military officer - relieves Coel of the sword immediately upon purchase and takes it with him on a diplomatic mission to Carthage (a mission from which he never returns). Coel and his mother have a tough time being slaves. Eventually she dies in captivity and Coel is expelled from the household because he's basically useless. Here I must suspend disbelief again. Why not sell him off or at least donate him to the government for a tax write off?

He begins life as a street urchin where he staves off starvation and grows from an eight year old tyro into a thirteen year old sling shot expert who can mash the eye out of his opponent's skull at thirty feet. What remarkable skill - with no training even.

Coel manages to survive and continue onward by:

1. Training and developing into a pretty good charioteer - OK, why not? He survived on the streets for five years.

2. Offending Theodora, the future empress of the Byzantine Empire, and turning her into a vindictive, life long enemy - Oh please! She had enough on her plate. She was in constant physical training as a dancer, memorizing lines as an actress and servicing clients as a whore. I doubt she had the time or inclination to track and harass a charioteer who refused to service her.
3. Talking his way past the guards at the imperial palace to inform on the activities of treasonous ringleaders - OK. Maybe given the dire circumstances of the Blue/Green Riots.
4. Earning the esteem of Belisarius during the riots and becoming the general's protege. - Chopping down poorly equipped rioters with a spatha wows the premier military man in the empire to such an extent that he becomes your mentor? Sounds like a stretch to me.
5. Joining the Roman army as an auxiliary cavalryman (which means becoming a member of a Germanic tribe) at age 30. - The army is meant for young studs, thirty is not really a good age to become a cavalry recruit.

Coel manages to progress by doing a load of improbable things even before he goes to war in North Africa. Man, that's where the deus ex machina really hit the fan. I'll let you discover those on your own.

And over all the years from slave market to becoming a German tribesman he never, ever gives up on getting his Julius Caesar, Red Death, short sword back. I wonder if Coel inspired the character Ralphie from In God We Trust: All Others Pay Cash with his Official Red Ryder Carbine-Action Two-Hundred-Shot Range Model Air Rifle with a compass in the stock and this thing that tells time.
[.https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BrBzB...](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BrBzB...)

I also think that Pillings is way too tough on Theodora and Antonia. He paints them as female versions of Caligula. While historically they were not exemplars of virtue I can't believe them to be as heartless and wanton as he portrays them. Graves in Count Belisarius and Duffy in Theodora: Actress, Empress, Whore treat them with a much more even hand.

Barring these faults, I enjoyed the novel. It gives a good soldier-eye view of Belisarius' campaign against the Vandal Kingdom. That's mainly what I was looking for.

Louise purfield-coak says

Treachery

This tale revolved around multiple treacherous events. All of the heroes in the story had to survive treachery. The city of Constantinople reeks of corruption and treachery. A great city rotted to the core.

Apostol Apostolov says

Disclaimer: I got the whole trilogy for FREE thanks to Kindle's unsustainable ecosystem of oversupply driving authors to give their hard work for free to enjoy a fleeting moment of interest.

All historic research of the Welsh tales about King Arthur and the late period of the Byzantine Empire done for this book is wasted on a bland empty vessel of a protagonist with less personality than a paperweight. The plot is full of deus ex machinas keeping it from falling apart. This is often the problem with historic fiction where the background is more important than the characters that inhabit it, but it is sad to see this book sticks to the trend.

Also, there are too many "evil Machiavellian women" from whom said protagonist protects his celibacy and life, which while entirely probable is too much the focus on the book. It would have not been the case if there were at least one notable exception.

Overall, it's not a bad book. It's not a good book either. Read it for the rich and detailed historic background. But don't expect much from the people who inhabit it.

Jean-luc says

Interesting book because it covers a time period of the Byzantine empire rarely covered. In addition, the historical characters seem to be well researched and somewhat accurately portrayed. Good read!

Aditi says

Beware of The Red Death, after all Julius Caesar himself defeated thousands of men with the sword, nobly called The Red Death. *Caesar's Sword* is a marvellous historical tale which will amaze you in every possible way.

This tale is about a man and his sword, how they are meant to be together forever, after all the sword was this man's birthright, no matter how many times it got snatched away from him, but surprisingly, the sword returned back to him, it also seems that the sword only responds to this man.

First of all thanks to Good Reads for choosing me as a First-reads winner and to the author David Pilling for sending me over the book.

Coel, the grandson of a great and powerful king, Arthur, who claimed a sword at a very tender age, popularly called as The Red Death. After his reign over the kingdom, the sword rightfully belonged to Coel. But unfortunately, Coel and his mother had to leave their kingdom and fled to Constantinople, where both of them were sold as slaves upon their arrival. But it's amazing to see, how Coel managed to keep his grandfather's name in a grand way. We see how Coel made his way from being a mere charioteer for street-fights to a great Roman warrior thus acquiring an officer rank. Even after so many false accusations by some past enemies, he managed to make a name of himself in honour to his grandfather, Arthur.

The story was told in Coel's words, which was actually so heart-touching, from the very first pages, we can feel the pain and sorrow of Coel. In this regard, we get to know about his character, who was strong and brave like his grandfather, but unlike his grandfather, he was a good man with a heart of gold. The author has written this tale in a very interesting way. The characters, other than Coel were so apt to this story, for instance Coel's mother, who is seen as a protective woman, who never stooped low in honour to her royal blood, then there's an evil character, Theodora, a sly empress of Constantinople, Belisarius, a true and loyal warrior and friend of Coel.

All-in-all, a great read with so many interesting legends and above all a remarkable journey of a warrior's life. So if you desire for some great adventures, deadly war and some unique history, this is a perfect book which fits the bill perfectly.

Mr Geoffrey Hopkins says

Good

Easy to read, full of action with well written characters. I Look forward to the next book in the series.

Christine says

Great story ... am looking forward to the next one
